

SAMUEL P. TAYLOR State Park

Our Mission

The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



California State Parks does not discriminate against individuals with disabilities. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at the phone number below. To receive this publication in an alternate format, write to the Communications Office at the following address.

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

P. O. Box 942896

Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

For information call: 800-777-0369

916-653-6995, outside the U.S.

711, TTY relay service

www.parks.ca.gov

Discover the many states of California.™

Samuel P. Taylor State Park

P. O. Box 251

Lagunitas, CA 94938

(415) 488-9897 (General Park Information)

(800) 444-7275 (Camping, Horse Camping
& Group Picnicking Reservations)



Samuel P. Taylor State Park is located just north of San Francisco in the steep rolling hills of central Marin County. Less than an hour's drive from San Francisco, the 2,882-acre park is within easy driving distance of some of northern California's most dramatic outdoor scenery. It is just seven miles east of the spectacular Point Reyes National Seashore. It is also close to Mount Tamalpais State Park, the Marin headlands, and Muir Woods National Monument.

History

In 1849, shortly after hearing about the great gold discovery in California, Samuel Penfield Taylor and a group of adventurous young friends purchased an old schooner, fitted her out and set sail for California from Boston Harbor. Ten months later, after several stopovers for emergency repair work, the little schooner finally arrived in San Francisco Bay.

Taylor did some business in San Francisco and then joined his friends in the gold country. Two years later, in August 1852, he shipped 6,173 pennyweight of gold to Curtis, Perry and Ward, his San Francisco bankers. The dust netted him \$5,691.99 and gave him his start in California.

Back in San Francisco, Taylor entered the lumber business and shortly afterward purchased 100 acres of timberland along with what is now Papermill



The old mill on Papermill Creek, circa 1890

Creek within the present state park. Timber was plentiful, but Taylor did not go into the logging business. Instead he built a paper mill and installed a paper-making process that utilized only scrap paper and rags gathered from San Francisco and other coastal towns. The mill produced newsprint for the dailies in San Francisco, fine paper for use as election ballots and other official documents, and square-bottomed paper bags, which were quite a novelty at the time.

Thirty thousand kegs of blasting powder were manufactured in a powder mill that Taylor built and operated at another site in the canyon. The mill was an extremely profitable venture at first,

but Taylor's dream of becoming a major black-powder supplier ended with a violent explosion in November 1874. The mill never reopened.

A little town with about 100 families sprang up around Taylor's paper mill. Access to the area remained difficult, however, until 1874 when a narrow gauge railroad was built through the canyon to serve the Point Reyes-Tomales Bay area. Taylor built a resort hotel beside the new railroad, and opened Camp Taylor, one of the first areas in the United States to offer outdoor camping as a recreational pursuit. During the late 1870s and early 1880s, Taylorville was one of northern California's most popular and well-known weekend recreation areas.

The Park Today

The natural landscape of the park includes some sharp contrasts. Along the canyon bottoms and up the north-facing slopes there are cool, shaded, fern-filled groves of coast redwoods, *Sequoia sempervirens*. A wonderful variety of flowers and lush green groundcovers thrive in these groves.

The striking *Aralia californica*, or elk clover, displays immense leaves that drape low over the stream banks, and in early summer, huge clusters of cream-colored blossoms appear.

Just a short distance away, on the canyon's dry north side, is a more open grassland area where oak, tanoak, madrone, and other hardwoods are the dominant trees.

This area is most

enjoyable during the spring and early summer when temperatures are moderate and California's grasslands are still lush and green. A network of hiking trails and fire roads make it easy to hike to the top of Mount Barnabe where turkey vultures, kestrels, red-tailed hawks, and other large raptors soar wild and free over the rolling countryside.

Many people consider Devil's Gulch the most attractive area in the park. Wide grassy slopes offer countless opportunities to relax, bask in the sun, and perhaps enjoy a picnic. And Devil's Gulch Creek provides a touch of coolness on warm days during the summer. Live oak, laurel, Douglas fir, and madrone are the most common trees in this part of the park. A succession of California native wildflowers add an ever-changing highlight to

the landscape—buttercups and milkmaids early in spring followed by Indian paintbrush and the aptly-named farewell-to-spring as summer approaches.

Black-tailed deer are the most common large animal in the park, and there are countless squirrels and other small animals in residence. Raccoons, striped skunks, and gray foxes are often seen, while badgers and bobcats are seen only occasionally. Mountain lions have been known to visit the park area, but actual sightings are extremely rare.

In the winter silver salmon and steelhead trout still migrate up Papermill Creek to spawn. But the number of fish involved in these annual runs is not what it used to be. Destruction of natural habitat by humans, and a series of natural disasters, have reduced these fisheries dramatically. In response to this crisis, the California Department of Fish and Game and a number of volunteer groups have set out to restore the stream and its fisheries. While this process is underway, fishing is not permitted in Papermill Creek. Fishing is permitted, however, in the lakes that lie just outside the park on Marin Municipal Water District land. A state fishing license is required.

Lagunitas (Papermill) Creek

Starting in November of each year, Papermill Creek makes it possible for visitors to enjoy a truly fascinating and wonderful natural spectacle—the annual spawning runs of the silver salmon. If one



Samuel P. Taylor and employees in front of S. P. Taylor Paper Company office in San Francisco, circa 1890



View from Barnabe Peak



Lagunitas Station, circa 1870

is very quiet and careful, it is possible to watch the salmon once they have reached their favorite spawning riffles. It is also possible to watch them make their dramatic ascent of the waterfalls and rapids coming up Papermill Creek from the ocean. These runs may continue all the way through February, but they are usually over by late December.

These fish are three years old and near the end of their life-cycle. A number of very definite changes take place at this time. When the fish enter fresh water they turn color. Males turn brick red, females turn a dull bronze. The upper jaw of the male becomes enlarged and distorted, often curving down to form a hook—the feature that gave this west coast salmon its generic name, *Oncorhynchus kisutch* (hooked nose salmon), and distinguishes it most clearly from its east coast relative, the Atlantic salmon, *Salmo salar*. (Note: The largest silver salmon ever caught in California—22 pounds—was caught in January 1959 right here in Papermill Creek.)

Steelhead trout, *Salmo gairdnerii*, generally make their spawning runs up Papermill Creek a bit later than silver salmon, usually during the months of February and March. Unlike the rambunctious salmon, the steelhead spawns

quietly, returns to the ocean, and may return to spawn two or even three times. Mature steelhead can be recognized by their sharply defined small black dots and, when in fresh water, a broad pink or red stripe on each side of the body.

During the late 1960s and 1970s, extremely low summertime water levels sharply limited the number of young silver salmon and steelhead. Summer fishing reduced this number still further. More recently, however, fishing in Papermill Creek has been prohibited and the Marin Municipal Water District has agreed to maintain a more normal minimum summertime flow of water.

A more reliable stream flow will benefit the fish that use this stream, and at the same time benefit at least one member (a very tiny member) of California's endangered species list—the California freshwater shrimp, *Syncaris pacifica*. This translucent to brown to dark reddish-purple shrimp was once common north of San Francisco Bay but is now found in just five California streams within Napa, Sonoma, and Marin Counties. Papermill Creek—throughout its entire length—is one of this species' few remaining prime habitats.

Bicycle Trail

A paved bike trail runs about three miles through Samuel P. Taylor State Park from near the park entrance west to Tocaloma. It is ideal for family

bicycle outings; there is no vehicular traffic, it is gentle, nearly level, and quite scenic. The trail follows the old Northwest Pacific Railroad right-of-way which ran from Larkspur through this canyon to Tomales Bay and northward to Cazadero.

Camping

There are 61 family campsites in the redwood groves, each with a table, wood stove, food locker, and parking space. Piped drinking water and restrooms with hot showers are nearby. The parking spaces at several of the campsites will accommodate small trailers, but electricity, water and sewage hookups are not available. A special camping area has been set aside for bicyclists.

Two group campsites are located in the Madrone Group Area, about 300 yards west of the park entrance on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. Madrone Group Camp #1 can accommodate up to 50 people, and Madrone Group Camp #2 can accommodate up to 25 people. The sites may be combined to accommodate a group of up to 75. Reservations for both family and group camping may be made by calling (800) 444-7275.

Devil's Gulch Horse Camp has a corral, hitching racks, watering troughs, and a camping area for up to 25 people. Reservations for the horse camp may be made by calling (800) 444-7275.

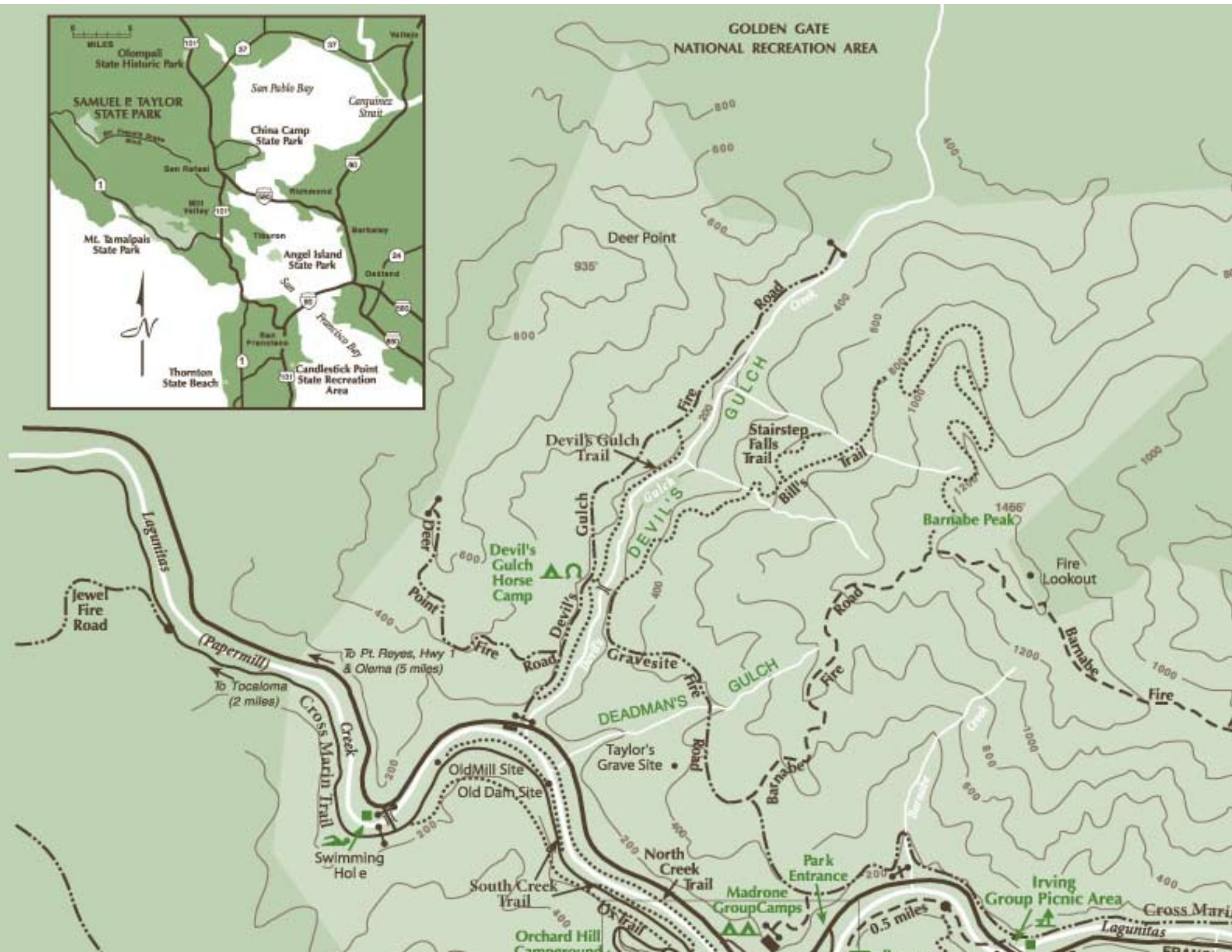
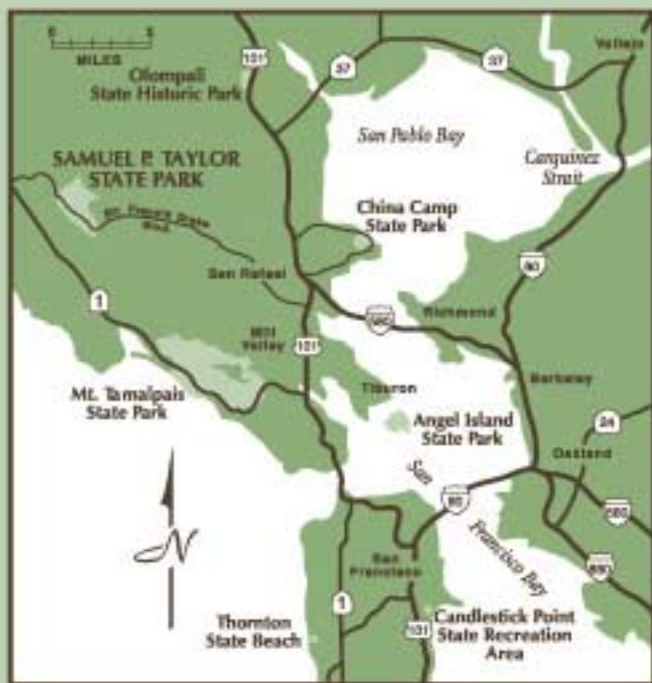
Picnicking

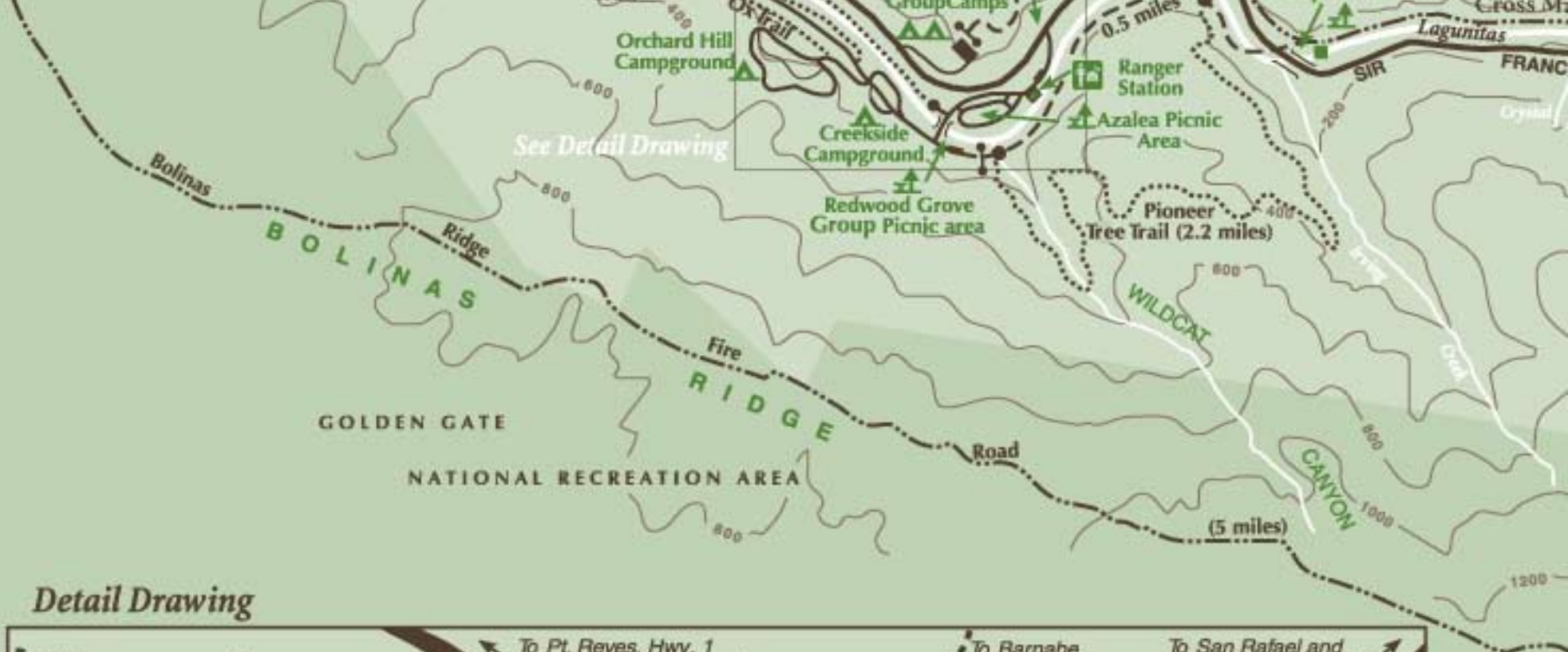
The main picnic area at Samuel P. Taylor State Park is in a cool redwood grove along Papermill Creek. Each individual site has a table and a stove. Piped drinking water and restrooms are nearby.

The Redwood Grove Picnic Area accommodates groups as large as 75 people. It is available by reservation only. Reservations can be made by calling (800) 444-7275.

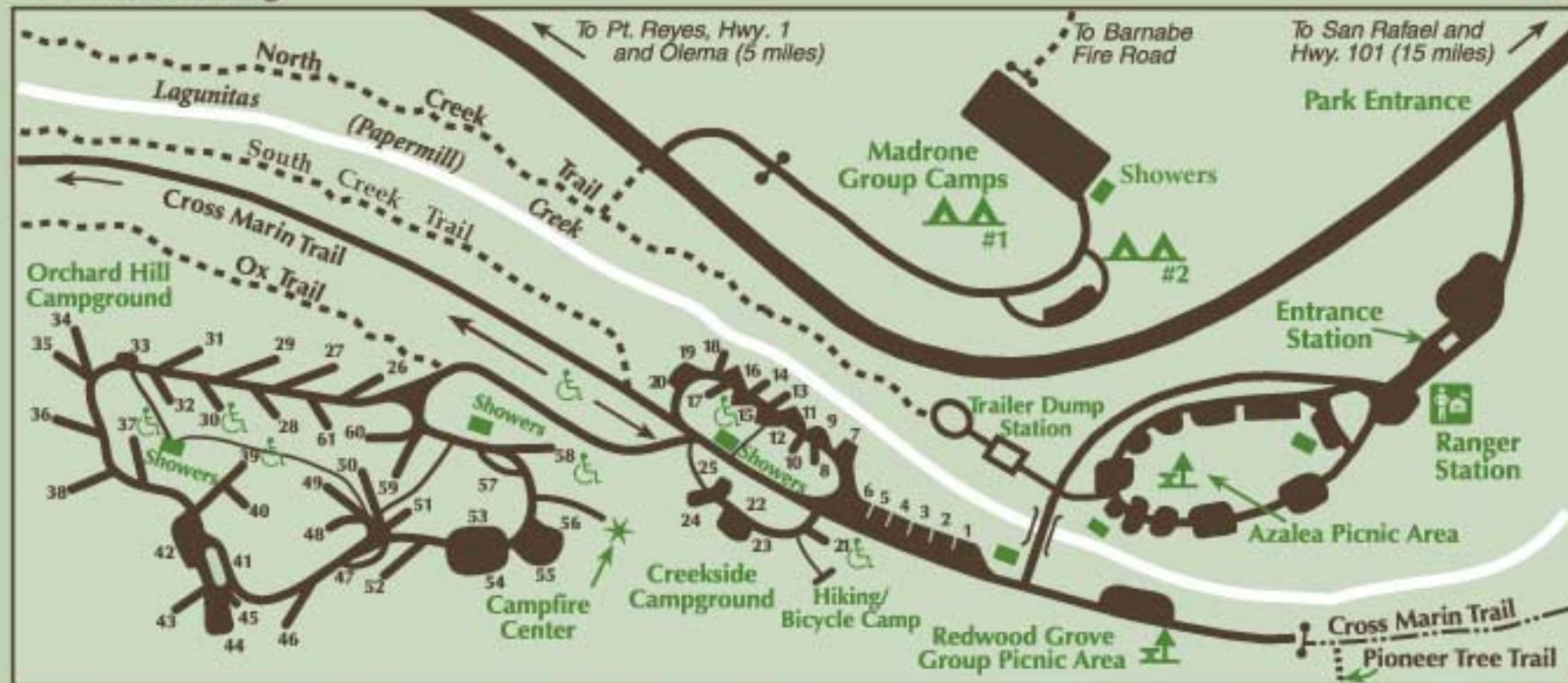


Swimming Hole on Papermill Creek



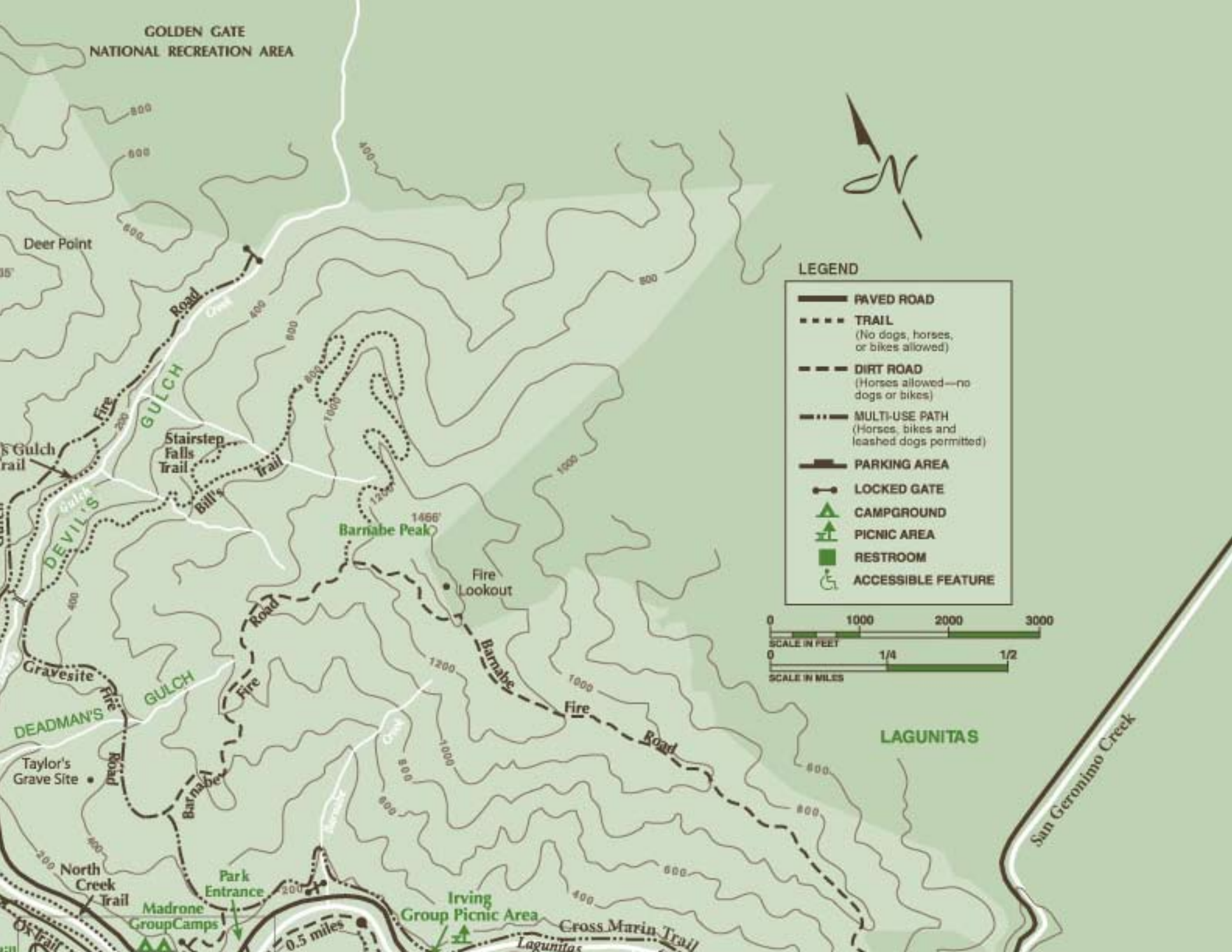


Detail Drawing



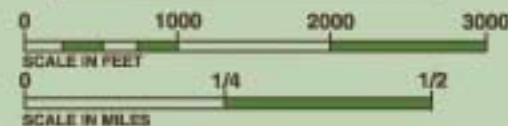
The Cross Marin Trail from the Redwood Grove Picnic Area to the Swimming Hole is accessible. 

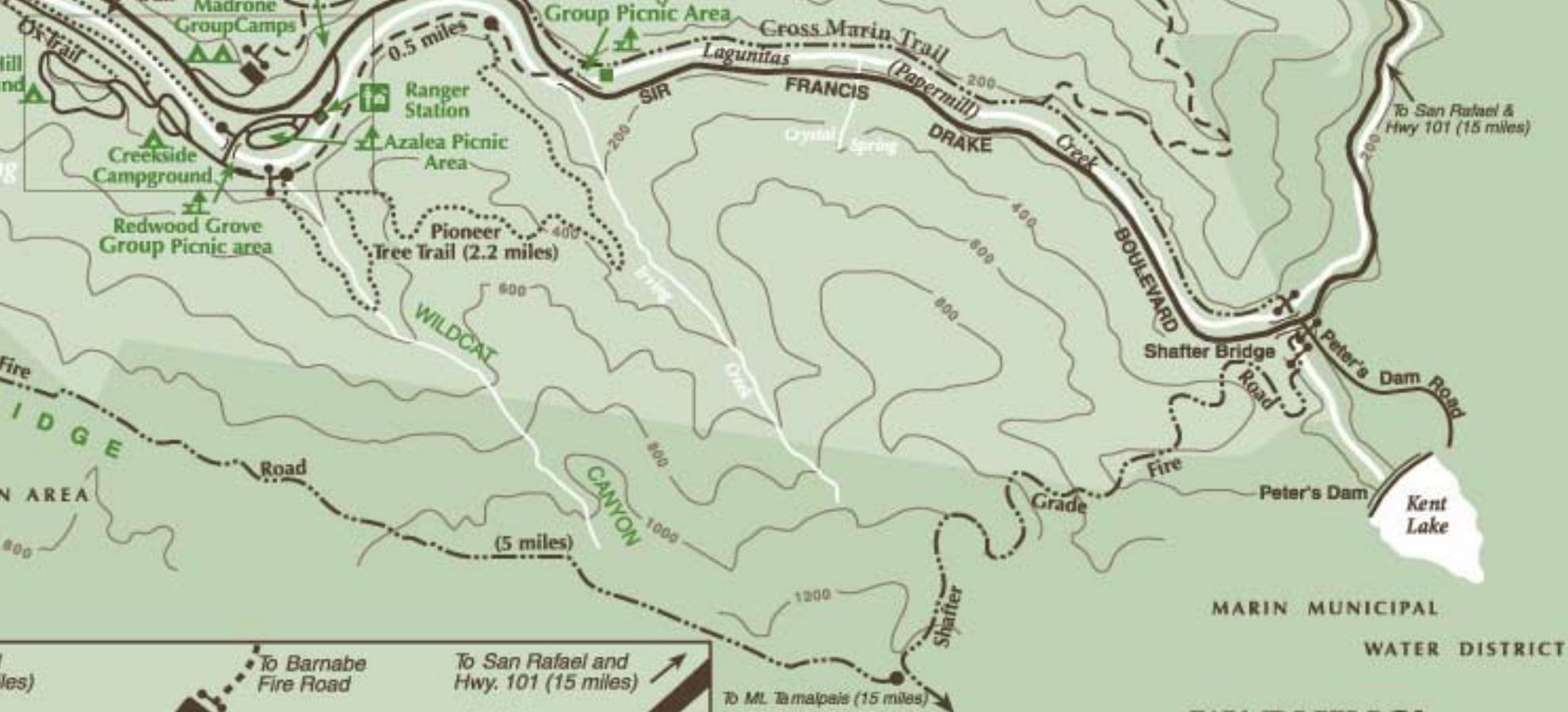
GOLDEN GATE
NATIONAL RECREATION AREA



LEGEND

- PAVED ROAD
- TRAIL
(No dogs, horses, or bikes allowed)
- DIRT ROAD
(Horses allowed—no dogs or bikes)
- MULTI-USE PATH
(Horses, bikes and leashed dogs permitted)
- PARKING AREA
- LOCKED GATE
- CAMPGROUND
- PICNIC AREA
- RESTROOM
- ACCESSIBLE FEATURE





Area to the Swimming Hole is accessible. ♿

WARNING!

Poison Oak, which is prevalent in the park, has an oily substance on its leaves that is highly irritating to the skin. Note carefully the shape of the leaves, which turn from a shiny green in the spring to rich orange and red in the fall.

